

# Monument honors blacks who came to Utah as pioneers



Mildred Ellis, left, and Mary L. Bankhead view monument plaque with picture of Green Flake, Mary's great-great-grandfather and one of 3 blacks with the Orson Pratt party of pioneers.

PHOTOGRAPHY/ PAUL BARKER

**By Clint Barber**

Deseret News staff writer

Mary Lucile Bankhead said she could never understand why blacks in other parts of the world are not treated as well as she has been during her life in Salt Lake City.

Bankhead, a lifetime resident of the area, was among guests at the dedication Friday of a monument and plaque in Evergreen Park, 2150 E. Evergreen Ave., honoring the blacks who came as original Utah pioneers.

The monument was sponsored by the Beehive Chapter of the Sons of Utah Pioneers.

Bankhead is a great-great-granddaughter of Green Flake, one of three blacks who came into the valley with the Orson Pratt party in 1847.

"I've always had a good life here — never had any trouble," she said. "If mother or one of us was sick, the neighbors always came in to help and bring food."

Flake, whose portrait is illustrated on the plaque, died the year Bankhead was born, in 1921, but she remembers stories about him. "He had said that he would always do his work and never make trouble, and none of his masters would ever strike him — because he wouldn't stand for it."

The first black child born in the valley was the offspring of a slave owned by John Bankhead. The baby was

given the name of Dan Bankhead Freeman.

Flake, Oscar Crosby and Hark Lay were slaves, but took their masters' surnames. The blacks subsequently settled on Cottonwood Creek and the Fort Union area. Many of their descendants are still living there.

Korla Woods, assistant director of ethnic study affairs at the University of Utah and a consultant for special programs of the Utah Jazz, gave the principal address at the dedication, representing the governor.

He said the blacks have "made significant contributions to our great state, despite enduring the test of time, prejudice and discrimination."

As a climax to his speech he quoted Jon Edward Jacob, president of the National Urban League: "As a people, we must remember that we are not as weak as we have allowed ourselves to be painted, and we are not as strong as we can be."

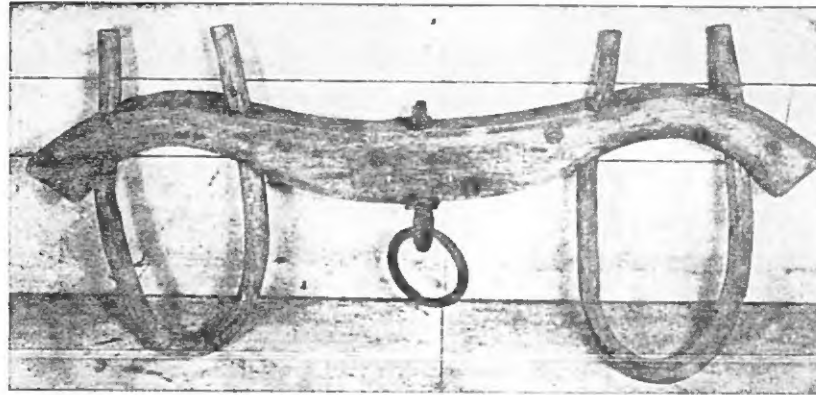
Bishop Bryan J. Renstrom of the LDS 12th Ward, in dedicating the monument and plaque, said "May it be a reminder of the sacrifices they (the blacks) made in facing prejudice and persecution; and . . . may we unite and put those things behind us."

France A. Davis, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, gave the opening prayer.

Other special guests included Wallace Bates, president of the National Society of the SUP, and Beehive Chapter President Robert Farr Smith. Members of the committee who directed planning and building of the monument and plaque were Jerome Tullis and Jim Telford.



The handcart had two large wheels and was made of oak with the axle formed out of strong hickory. The pulling shafts extended three or four feet in front of the cart body so that the lead man, woman or child could pull it. The width of the cart matched that of wagon tracks, making it possible to travel in the ruts left by the wagons of preceding pioneers. The body of the cart was seven feet long and one and one-half feet deep.



Ox Yoke — Lower Floor.

*The Blacksmith Shop.* The importance of the village smithy in the building of the west can only be realized by remembering that farming and transportation were done with the help of horses and oxen. The blacksmith was indispensable in keeping them well shod. In fact, the blacksmith might well be termed one of the most important men in early Utah, for his aid was sought in nearly every industry where machinery was used. Generally speaking, the blacksmith shop was a small building made of slabs or rough lumber, and inside was a work bench, a forge with bellows, an anvil, tongs, hammers, a rasp for smoothing horses hooves, pincers, horseshoe nails, etc. Many of the tools were homemade, the only iron available being that which was on the wagons which had carried the pioneers across the plains. The bellows were made of leather.

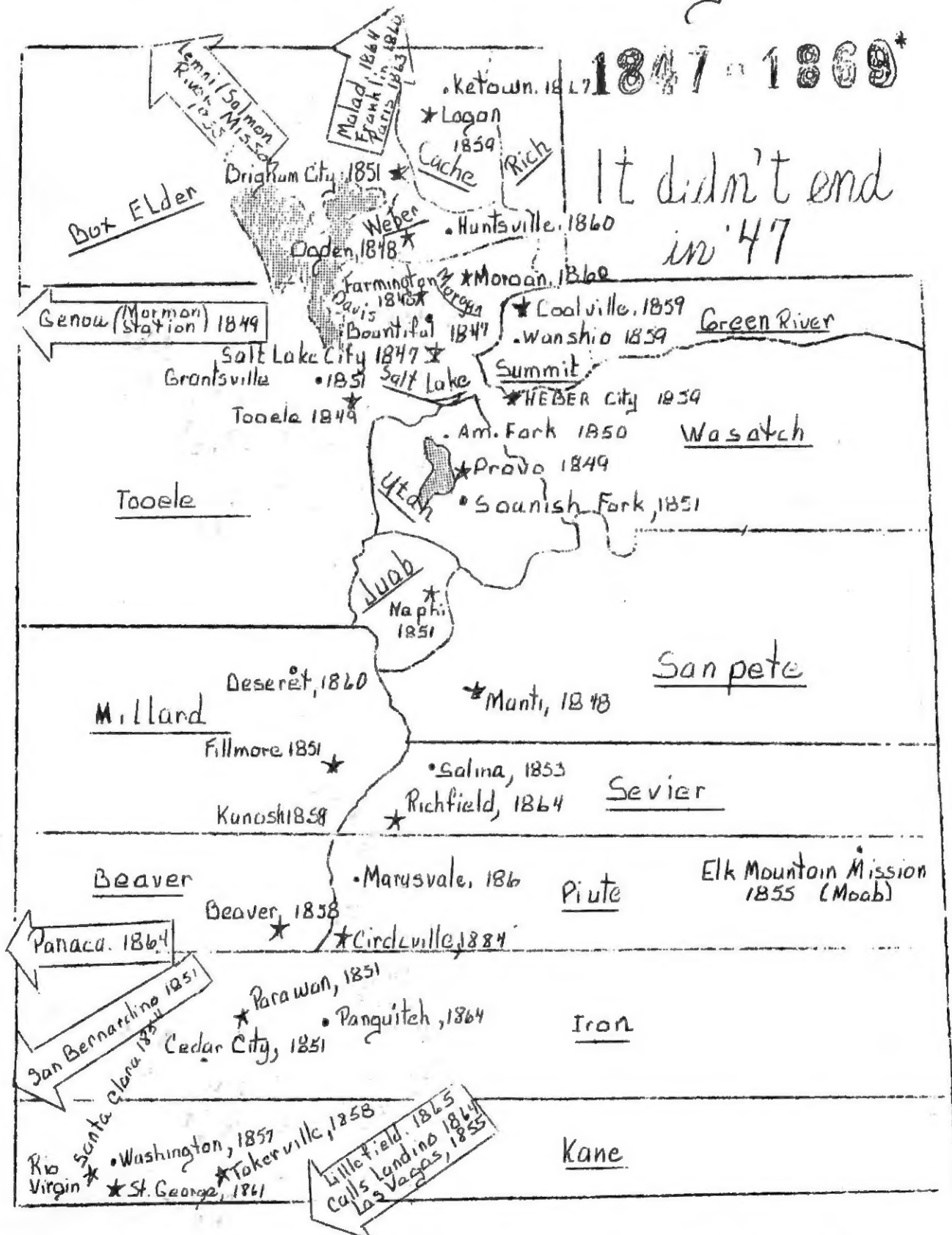
In the first shops charcoal was used for firing even after coal was hauled from Coalville, that fuel being considered too dirty and soft for the smith's particular use. Trips for the purpose of securing and preparing charcoal were made to Cedar and Rush valleys, Tintic, Bingham, Harker's and Little Cottonwood canyons. Such events were gala days for the boys and young men who accompanied their elders. After felling a large number of cedar or pinion pines, preferably cedars, a pile of logs about twenty-five feet long and eight feet high would be carefully arranged in such a manner as to leave



### *He Did It With A Knife And Patience*

C. D. Sparks, Salt Lake woodcarver of oxen and covered wagons, exhibits his creations as the anniversary of the coming of the pioneers to Utah retu

# Mormon Pioneering



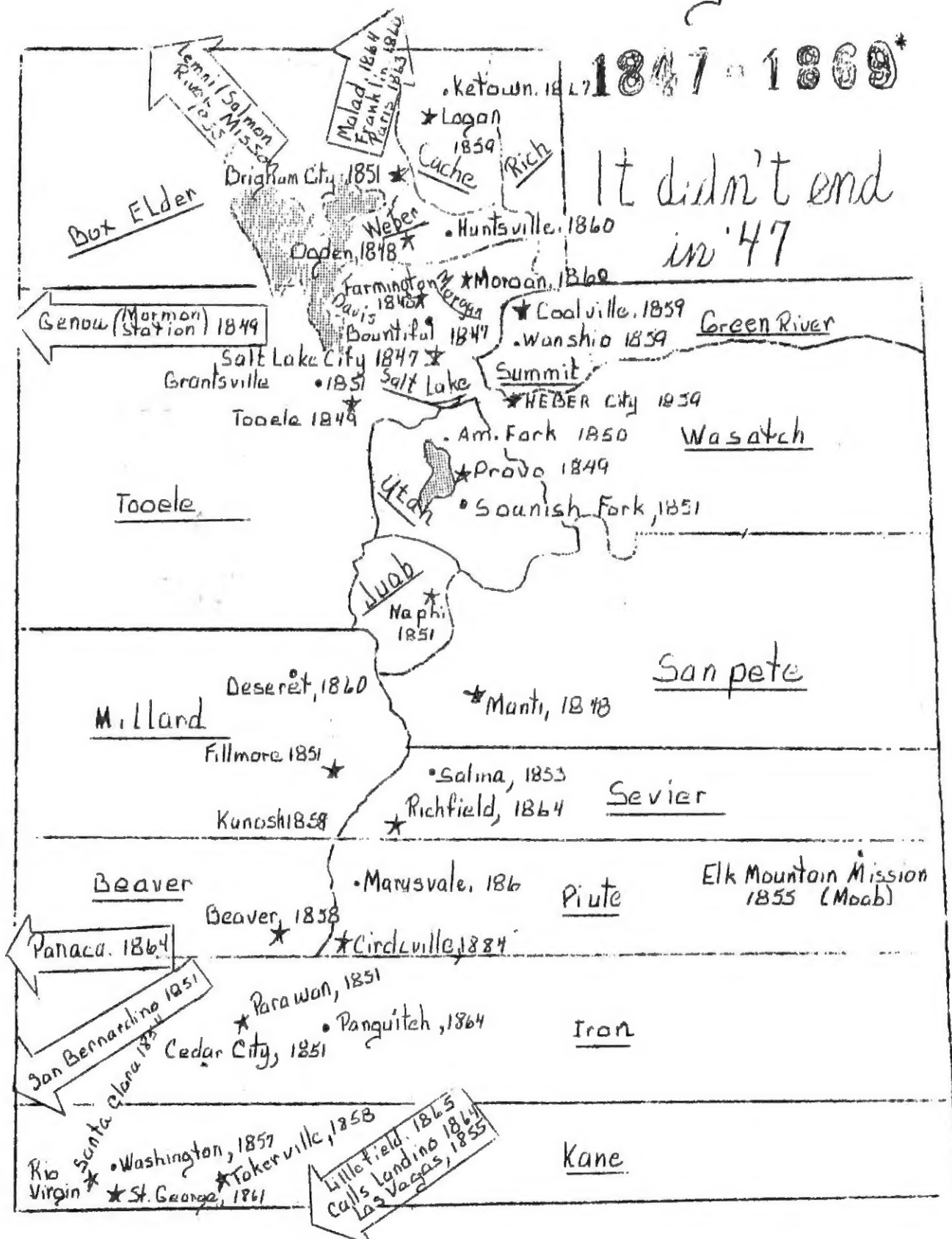
- Some of the early settlements within each of the then constituted counties.
- ★ County Seats

\*End of the era of overland immigration (pioneering) as first Saints arrived in Utah via the Union Pacific Railroad, June 25, 1869.

Dates shown are of the first settlement as published in the Encyclopedic History of the Church by Andrew Jensen, assistant church historian; Deseret News Pub. Co., Salt Lake.

County boundaries shown were those existing as of June, 1869.

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